



T. H. E.

B U S Y B O D Y.

N U M B E R XI.

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THURSDAY, November the 1st, 1759.

*Si quid novisti rectius istis
Candidus imperti, si non, his utere mecum.*

S I R,

IT is a constant observation made by all foreigners who come into this island, or see any of our islanders, that there is a greater variety of characters in England, than in any other nation in the world. The remark is founded upon truth and experience. Naturalists, who dive deep into causes and effects, pretend to account for it from our climate, our liberty, or some occult reasons too refined and abstruse, to be the subject of this Paper. The fact is certain, be the cause of it what it may.

may. With your leave therefore, Mr. Busy Body, from the variegated mass of characters which nature has stamped upon her several editions of Englishmen, I will endeavour to point out three different personages nurtured from the root of the same tree. This triumvirate is not always sufficiently distinguished. They too often are grooped under the general denomination of madmen or fools. It is a careless indolent way of defining their peculiarities: And as the negative cannot be proved, few people think it worth their while to run into definitions, that are so easily explained by one single term: But as in the course and commerce of my life, I have observed a very remarkable difference and distinction between each of the characters, which I would here describe; I hope it may not be totally unworthy of your attention to look at the pictures I shall exhibit, of

The odd Man.

The singular Man.

The hippish Man.

The odd Man, is not only of absolute English growth, but his species, like the Irish wolf-dog, can scarce be propagated in any other country. Search for him beyond the Twede, he is not to be found. Look for him in Ireland, he may have been transplanted thither, but the Hibernian air is as fatal to him as to toads and serpents: He snuffs it up, crawls into a ditch and dies. Let us consider then what is the true definition of an odd man. It is certain that he is not a fool; on the contrary he has good sense tinctured with absurdity. He is often a wit. In his general conduct he is rather excentric than imprudent. He differs in all the actions of his life, in all the gestures of his body, in all the thoughts of his mind, from the generality of his fellow-creatures. Nay, he differs from himself, as much as the seasons of the year differ from themselves. He is sometimes hot as summer, and sometimes

cold

cold as winter towards his oldest friends, and most acknowledged acquaintance. In one hour he knows his intimates, in the next he cannot recollect who they are. Unless he relishes his company he is silent, surly, or, when he speaks, is peevishly rude. Give him the companions he chuses, no man more happy, no man more agreeable. Let a stranger appear, and he again returns to his affected taciturnity. He has an utter abhorrence of foreigners, and deems every man, if born upon the continent, either a coxcomb or a fool. Strong ingredients of pride may be perceived throughout his whole behaviour. Having in his youth, especially at the university, drank deep of the cup of loftiness, it intoxicates him during his whole life. An awkward bashfulness adds to the appearance of pride ; and every degree of ease and familiarity being wanting, the composition of the man is always rendered disgusting, and often contemptible, although there may be ingredients within him, that unless smothered by oddness, must have been an honour to the possessor, and a benefit to his country. Next to foreigners, he abhors courtiers. The court is a scene of politeness. The odd man seldom or ever appears at court ; he calls his absence patriotism. If he called it peevishness, oddness, or sheepishness, he would give it the true name : Nor is he ever mentioned or thought of within the precincts of St. James's, unless when a chairman wants an assistant.

A MAN of very deep learning, without the least knowledge of the world, must always be an odd man. Well and wisely therefore did a friend of mine write with a diamond pencil upon the casement of his chamber in Oxford, these lines :

George Goggle, his window,
God gave him grace there out to look,
And see the folk pass to and fro ;
So study man, instead of book.

IF an odd man marries an odd woman, which is too frequently the case, the offspring are generally lunatics. If the
lunacy

lunacy be of the melancholy or methodistical kind, it is irrecoverable, and far beyond the skill of Dr. Monroe. In such an unhappy case the heir of the family must end his course of life in a dark room upon a bed of straw : But if a demi-lunatic, not absolutely too far gone, marries a woman of sound understanding, of decent regular behaviour, and of some proper degree of vivacity and chearfulness, it is more than probable that from such an alliance, a wit will arise in all the glory of superior talents. Hence the observation of our poet,

Great wits to madness sure are near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

WITS seldom endure longer than a single succession : They relapse again into odd men. There is scarce any instance of a witty father producing a witty son : But odd men last from generation to generation. I am at present acquainted with the *oddest* grandson of the *oddest* grandfather that was ever known. My friend, Oakley Coothless, Esq; began early to shew great indications of *oddness* : Having from his cradle been habituated to lye in the same bed with his grandmother, he continued the custom till he was near the age of seventeen. His father reprimanded him for so improper and so indecent a practice ; but Oakley's answer soon disarmed him of all anger : “ I “ think, Sir, said the young 'Squire, I may take the liberty of “ lying every night with your mother, since you take the li-“ berty of lying every night with mine.”

OAKLEY was sent to Gray's-Inn to study the law : But as odd men never follow directions, he scorned the laborious works of *Salkeld*, and directed his studies to *the German Flute* ! He was afterwards transported to Paris, and had commendatory letters to the English ambassador there. He dined once with his lordship, and passed the rest of his time in a voluntary confinement within his own *hôtel*, dreading nothing more than to be seen in a bag wig, or to be asked a question in a language which he did not understand. His father's sudden death

death delivered him not only from France, but from a projected journey into Italy. He returned to us with all the prejudices of an Englishman. He burnt his bag wig at his arrival in Golden-Square : He sold his French clothes to the Playhouse ; and he fullenly ordered his travelling tutor, upon whom he settled a very handsome annuity, never to visit him but on quarter days. His deportment at his country seat convinced his neighbours and dependants that their company was not agreeable. " Gentleman, said he, I will do you any service in " my power, but I hate duty papers : They are duns for the " immediate discharge of time ; and I shall keep the whole " species out of my house in the country, as I do out of my " house in town. When I want you I will send for you ; in " the mean while, as a free-born Englishman, I insist upon " having my hours and thoughts at my own disposal."

OUR 'Squire passes his winters in London. He appears, the court and the opera excepted, in most of the public places of resort always alone, and always in a dress peculiar to himself. In a general mourning he may be seen in the front boxes in a red plush frock, laced ruffles, an embroidered buff waist-coat, and white Nankeen breeches. He commonly places himself as near as possible to the celebrated K---y F---r ; and has lately often swore to me that he would certainly speak to her, if he was not apprehensive of certain bullies who hover round her in black swords and weepers. " Not, Sir, says " he, that I am afraid of any man, but a body you know " would not have his name handed about in Chronicles and " Magazines." After the play, he sometimes accompanies a few friends, whom he chuses always to call by their Christian names, to the Bedford Arms : And as I am generally one of the number, give me leave to assure you that I frequently go home in a kind of astonishment, by hearing from him a great deal of good sense and rational conversation, mixed with such prejudices, narrowness of judgment, violence of passion, and

ridi-

ridiculous notions of the world, as might almost tempt me to the wild opinion that a man, at least an Englishman, has two souls.

I FIND that I have been betrayed into a whole length, when I only intended a half-length picture. The portrait of my friend Coothless has taken up too much room to allow sufficient vacancy for the other English gentlemen, whom I proposed to place in the same rank. Some future opportunity must admit them in their proper attitudes.—I had written thus far when the third number of your lucubrations was brought to me, in which your correspondent says, “*However not to seem an odd Fish, I rose from my seat, &c.*” The expression of odd fish has struck me, as being a phrase which it was necessary in my present undertaking to explain. The odd fish is similarly relative to the odd man, especially when the latter is taken in a net that draws him to the shore of good company. He flounces, he flounders, he gasps for breath, he languishes after his proper element; and if he is not returned soon to the regions of deepness and mud, he beats himself to pieces.

To enter into the *Minutiae* of odd men might be tedious and unnecessary. In Oakley (so named by his father, because he was born on the 29th of May) you see them all: Their dress, their phisiognomy, their awkwardness discover them. It will be almost ridiculous to add, that I have known many short-fighted men who are not odd men; but I never saw an odd man who was not short-sighted.

I HAVE the honour, Sir, to be your kinsman, and am really your friend and well-wisher. In some future address you shall have my name uncurtailed, at present be pleased to accept of the initial letters T. O.

* * In order to oblige such of my relations, as choose to promote my work, Mr. POTTINGER, my publisher, at the *Dunciad* in Pater-noster-Row, has, in allusion to his own sign, and to the fable of Apuleius, placed a *Golden Ass* in his shop, to receive their offerings; and I doubt not but their contributions will make his *Ass* as famous for its wit, as *Button's Lion* was for its eloquence.